

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service



News Release

Midwest Region

External Affairs Office

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Keystone Hatcheries Pleads Guilty to Lacey Act Violation

HAMMOND, Ind.—On Nov. 17, 2010 Keystone Hatcheries (KSH) agreed to plead guilty to one count of violating the Lacey Act in the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Indiana, for illegally transporting fish into Indiana after a documented outbreak of Whirling Disease at their facility. Based in Richmond, Ill., KSH is the hatchery division of Robinson Wholesale, Inc. (RWI) of Genoa City, Wis.

In addition to the guilty plea, KSH has agreed to pay \$75,000 for the Lacey Act violation, of which, \$35,000 will go to the State of Indiana to monitor watersheds where KSH knowingly stocked fish and look for potential WD outbreaks. The remaining \$40,000 will be paid to the Lacey Act Reward Fund.

Whirling Disease (WD) is a chronic, parasitic infection of hatchery-raised and wild salmonids (salmon and trout) that was accidentally introduced into the United States around 1955 through Brown Trout, and is currently found in 25 states. WD is caused by a microscopic parasite known as *Myxobolus cerebralis*, causing nerve and cartilage damage which results in the outward signs of whirling disease. It is common for fish carrying the disease to be symptom-free, but severe whirling disease infections can kill salmonid fish.

USFWS Fisheries Biologist Corey Puzach of the LaCrosse Fish Health Center explains that “WD is an extremely devastating parasite and controlling its spread is important in the protection of Rainbow Trout and other native salmonids.” The public can help slow the spread of WD by always disinfecting fishing gear and never moving or transporting fish, water, mud or aquatic plants to new locations.

This pending court action is a result of a joint-investigation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and Indiana Department of Natural Resources, with critical assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Tim Santel, Resident Agent in Charge for Illinois and Missouri noted that the success of this case is “rooted in the strong partnerships our agents have with our state counterparts” and that “they are essential in stemming the tide against the spread of such diseases.”

After a 2008 WD outbreak in Rainbow trout was identified at KSH in Richmond, Ill., a 2009 permit from the Indiana DNR was issued which restricted KSH from stocking in 15 Indiana counties with trout populations. Shortly after the issuance of the restricted permit, KSH’s parent company applied for an amended INDNR permit to haul fish for those areas. This amendment added the fish species to the RWI permit for which KSH was restricted to transport in Indiana. Such a transport was a violation of the federal Lacey Act. KSH’s Lacey Act violation is a Class D felony and could have had a maximum corporate fine of \$500,000. The next court date is tentatively set for Dec. 2, 2010.

For more information about Whirling Disease, visit: <http://whirlingdisease.montana.edu>

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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